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82nd plenary meeting
Monday, 28 March 2011, 10.15 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Deiss ..... (Switzerland)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Address by Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy

The President (*spoke in French*): Today, the Assembly will hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy.

On behalf of all States members of the General Assembly, I welcome President Napolitano. We are very honoured to welcome him here today. It is a great privilege to hear the message of a man who is deeply committed to his Republic and who, throughout his political career, has been in turn a militant, a parliamentarian and a minister, and is today the President of his country. His reputation as an author, professor and speaker is well known.

He is the President of a country, Italy, that marked its 150th anniversary of existence on 17 March. Of course, we are all familiar with the incomparable genius and immense influence of his country and people throughout the world. We know that their greatness and inestimable contributions to Western civilization are considerably older than their unity. These contributions range from Roman law to urbanism and architecture; from the culinary arts to literature and the fine arts; from football to cinema; from *bel canto* to fashion and design — the list goes on and on.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the unification movement in Italy responded to the aspirations of President Napolitano's forefathers to independence, freedom and justice. Today, in the early twenty-first century, uprisings in the Arab world bear witness to the universal and timeless value of those aspirations. In the face of these events, the international community must act responsibly, united and in solidarity.

I am pleased to underscore the fact that the Italian Constitution grants an extremely important role to international organizations in ensuring peace and justice among nations. Its article 11 "promotes and encourages international organizations furthering such ends". The United Nations was created to promote peace, security and prosperity throughout the world, and it is the pre-eminent forum where the solidarity of the international community must be expressed and solutions forged. The United Nations is the pre-eminent forum for global governance.

I thank Italy for its commitment to the United Nations and for its financial, human and technical contribution to defending and promoting the fundamental values of our Organization. It plays an essential role in United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. If the United Nations is to

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continue to be a central forum for global governance, it must be a strong and enduring instrument. To that end, it must resolutely carry through the reforms under way, in particular Security Council reform. In that connection, I welcome Italy's great commitment to the intergovernmental negotiation process.

As the central forum for global governance, the United Nations also has close contacts with two other major stakeholders in the sphere of governance: the Group of Eight and the Group of 20 (G-20). Italy, as a member of those Groups, has a key role to play. It can be proud of its long-standing efforts on behalf of global governance and of its active participation in the construction of Europe. Rome has given its name to more than one European treaty and is the host of several important international organizations.

I have done my best to build bridges between the General Assembly and the G-20 in order to draw that Group closer to the United Nations. Bridges are built to be crossed. With the presence of President Napolitano here among us today, he has taken that initiative. I am pleased and thank him for it.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: It is my great honour to join President of the General Assembly Joseph Deiss in welcoming President Napolitano here today, and it is a personal pleasure for me to introduce him.

This cannot be said of many people, but President Napolitano is a legend in his own time. Looking over some notes put together by my staff this morning, I noticed a quote from a newspaper citing him as "the grand old man of the Italian Republic". That is high praise indeed and has little to do with chronological age. Another called him "the embodiment of Italian post-war history". And it is true.

For many decades, he has been a leading moral voice of his country, and far beyond. He has been a champion of public principle, good governance, openness, transparency and honesty as democracy's highest goods. He has written more books than many people have read, and through his tireless, consistent and eloquent advocacy, he has helped make Italy all that it is today.

President Napolitano has come to address our Assembly at an important time in the history of the United Nations — a time that, in its way, is no less critical and no less transformative than that epochal year of 1989 he has written about so often. Now, as then, we are witness to revolution. Revolutionary change is sweeping the Arab world, with repercussions that will be felt everywhere and by all. We face no less epochal change in other spheres, from climate change and fighting global poverty to advancing human rights.

Italy is in the vanguard of all these struggles, just as President Napolitano himself has so often been in the vanguard of so many of humankind's great and noble causes. As the sixth-largest contributor to the United Nations budget, Italy is supporting the United Nations three pillars: peace and security, development and human rights. Italy has been a great contributor to United Nations peacekeeping. Most recently, Italy has supported the international campaign in Libya pursuant to Security Council resolution 1973 (2011). On the economic front, as a member of the Group of Eight (G-8) and the Group of 20, Italy has advanced the global agenda to meet the Millennium Development Goals. This was evident in 2009 when Italy hosted the G-8 in L'Aquila following the earthquake there, and Italy's strong commitment has been consistent throughout.

Italy's contribution goes beyond resources and manpower. Italy provides a crucial service to United Nations operations through both logistical training and support. The United Nations Logistics Base in Brindisi is gaining in importance as the United Nations system relies more and more on global and regional hubs to operate more quickly and effectively. As our new global field support strategy progresses, the Brindisi Base will become even more important.

The United Nations Staff College in Torino plays a critical role in helping the United Nations to build a professional and modern workforce to serve the international community. Rome is host to many important United Nations agencies fighting hunger and addressing other global challenges, from criminal justice to rural development. The international community chose Italy's capital as the birthplace of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which has emerged as central to our global fight against impunity.

In addition to Italy's many contributions to the United Nations, President Napolitano has personally supported many of our causes. His Excellency's dedication to parliamentary democracy is especially

noteworthy. He has shown great passion for international and European policy issues as President of the Republic and as a member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies. And he has extended the reach of his influence well beyond Italy's borders through his service as a representative to the North Atlantic Assembly and the European Parliament. I applaud him and the great country he has served over the remarkable span of his distinguished career.

Let me conclude by calling all of our attention to the golden sphere in the plaza outside the visitor's entrance to this Assembly. "Sphere within a Sphere", they call it. Italy donated this fine work of art, symbolizing the emergence of a more harmonious new world from the chaos of the old. What could be more appropriate? After all, is that not our United Nations mission? I thank President Napolitano for his leadership. I encourage his even greater engagement in the international arena as we look to our common challenges ahead. And now, like the rest of us, I look forward to hearing his address here at this important hour.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy.

President Napolitano: Let me express my deepest gratitude for the kind and generous words just addressed to me and my country by President Deiss and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

It is for me a great honour to address the General Assembly at an extremely challenging time for all of us. We are witnessing significant threats to international peace and security, hotbeds of political instability, economic and financial turmoil and unprecedented natural disasters. The winds of freedom, human dignity and social justice are blowing strongly across the world. We need to uphold human rights as a foundation of political stability and sustainable growth. We need to strengthen international legitimacy and the rule of law. We need to renew our commitment to a multilateral system of international relations. We need the United Nations.

Italy's history, geography and culture are rooted in the Mediterranean. Europe's fortunes rise and fall with the Mediterranean. We Italians, Europeans, see ourselves as part of the Mediterranean. Seas and oceans unite peoples and destinies. Our future lies in a shared partnership with our friends in North Africa, in the Middle East and in the Gulf.

In recent weeks and months, a wave of turmoil and discontent has shaken many countries in the region. People have taken to the street. I will not hide our concern at this turn of events. Nobody likes instability at his doorstep. Yet in some cases the stability was more fragile and precarious than it looked, and we should have been more conscious of the possible consequences of authoritarian forms of Government and of corruption in the ruling elite circles. Instead, the path towards political compromise, dialogue with civil society and democratic participation that many Governments have bravely undertaken will result in strengthened State institutions and rule of law. Democracy will advance, rising from the inside, not imported from the outside. Firm and reliable foundations for economic growth and shared prosperity will be established.

Our Mediterranean partners and friends own their future, but they must know that they are not alone, isolated or forgotten. Italy and Europe stand ready to join forces with them and to support their efforts of political, social and economic renewal. In early March, with the Joint Communication of the European Commission on a partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the southern Mediterranean, the European Union (EU) put forward a more focused, innovative and far-reaching strategy, to respond to the changing landscape in the Mediterranean. The Communication says in part:

> "Political and economic reform must go hand-in-hand and help deliver political rights and freedom, accountability and participation. The EU should be ready to offer greater support to those countries ready to work on such a common agenda, but also reconsider support when countries depart from this track."

This is what long-lasting stabilization is about. Its foundations are to be sought in freedom, thriving civil society, respect of human rights, democratic progress, national reconciliation and good governance.

Unfortunately, none of these was anywhere to be seen in Libya. The Libyan Government rejected countless international calls, including a unanimous appeal from this body, and responded to dissent with

repression, to civilian protest with military force on an unprecedented scale. The world could not remain idle while large casualties and massive destruction were inflicted on its own population by the Libyan leader. The responsibility to protect falls on United Nations, while Chapter VII of the Charter explicitly mandates the use of force to maintain international peace and security.

In Libya, we are now in the process of protecting the civilian **population and enforcing the United** Nations Charter, **acting under the full international legitimacy of Security Council resolution** 1973 (2011) of 17 March. In no way do we underestimate the human costs and risks of military actions. In international missions abroad, Italy has paid a high price in human lives and sufferings.

However, as I stated in Geneva addressing the Human Rights Council on 4 March, international legal protection of human rights lies at the heart and core of the United Nations system, as evidenced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. It is more and more relevant to all Member States without exception. Human rights have progressively become a cornerstone of international relations. As a consequence, massive infringements of human rights make a regime illegitimate and place it out of the community of States.

This is a key concept that is constantly gaining ground, as shown by the adoption of resolution 1973 (2011). It does not mean exporting a specific model of democracy; it means promoting and protecting fundamental civil, political and religious freedoms as a precondition for the autonomous building, bottom-up, State by State, of any democratic system.

In any case, Libya belongs to a region that is undergoing profound change originating in the common principles of justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings, as President Obama highlighted in his Cairo speech in June 2009. These are values we all share. Having been recently reaffirmed by the Arab League, they have become a beacon for the transformation under way in the Mediterranean.

On 17 March, we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy. We are an ancient nation but a young State that became a Republic at the same time the United Nations were born. "Twice in our lifetime [the scourge of war] has brought untold sorrow to mankind", reads the Preamble of the Charter. In those same years, Italy embraced democracy at home and the international multilateral order in the world as two sides of the same coin. We enthusiastically adopted multilateralism. The two cornerstones of Italy's position in the sphere of international relations have been and are our participation in the birth and growth of the European Community and our adhesion to the Atlantic Alliance. **The United Nations embodies the same choice on a global scale. Respect for the rights and dignity of the human person, and the equal status of all nations large** and small make it a truly universal Organization.

At the time of the founding of the United Nations, Italy adopted its Constitution, which in its article 11

> "rejects war as an instrument of aggression against the freedom of other peoples and as a means for the settlement of international disputes... agrees, on conditions of equality with other States, to the limitations of sovereignty that may be necessary to a world order ensuring peace and justice among the nations... [and] promotes and encourages international organizations furthering such ends."

These ideals, embedded in the founding principles of the Republic, have inspired the international action of my country during the more than 60 years of life of the United Nations, and particularly our active contribution to building European supranational institutions.

In the millennium we have barely entered, the United Nations is confronted by old and new challenges. While international peace and security, human rights and sustainable development remain paramount, other conflicting issues have come to the fore. For the first time in history, economic progress, fostered by international cooperation, has succeeded in defeating absolute poverty and deprivation for a significant portion of humankind. Unfortunately, since 2008, a severe financial crisis has exposed the dramatic imbalances of the international economy and finance and, following the near collapse of the banking system and the sheer necessity of a bail-out, has led to an unprecedented accumulation of sovereign debt in many countries.

Finance and financial vehicles are moving fast — too fast for States to react in adequate time. This is not

a failure of globalization per se; it is a failure of international economic governance. For millions, such as farmers in remote regions earning a decent life thanks to better techniques of production or more adequate selling through mobile phones or the Internet, globalization has been a powerful engine of growth and well-being. But, of course, problems too have globalized, to the extent where sovereign nations are no longer able to provide a national framework to solve them. The globalization of problems demands the globalization of solutions.

In the economic realm, this is a world deeply transformed from that of the Bretton Woods institutions. The gold system has gone and, with the revolution in information technology, a click on the computer can move unlimited quantities of money, even virtual, as a bet on future outcomes. The paper economy sometimes gives the impression of subjugating the real one, much as production and work seem to be overtaken by financial speculation. While financial vehicles have certainly helped credit, they have also generated an unabashed confidence in the sustainability of family overspending, which was one of the causes of the 2008 international crisis. Its main cause probably lay in the weakening of old regulatory authorities and in the delay, if not reluctance to shape new rules and consequent institutions. It is in this direction that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has been tirelessly calling the United Nations to advance its agenda.

World stability is also at risk from natural disasters, profound changes and political upheaval. Since 2004, an unprecedented chain of tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, droughts and fires has brought extreme pain and sorrow, claiming hundreds of thousands of human lives. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate my solidarity with the Japanese people for the suffering inflicted on them by the most devastating tsunami, and my admiration for their resilience. It is time for the world community to reciprocate the generosity that Japan has never failed to extend in similar hardships.

Political upheavals can be explained by the bright side of globalization, which has made everyone feel like a citizen of a wider world. Time is running out for regimes that hide the truth, restrict the movement of peoples, and resort to lies, bribery and biased narratives of the outside world. Time is running out for cosmetic, limited reforms. What is at stake is the relationship between the citizen and the State — the so-called social contract. The world has a clear responsibility not only to help this new dawn to become a reality, but also to intervene whenever dictatorship, violence and obscurity try to stem the tide. The international community has to heed the call for freedom, justice and fair opportunities coming from societies hitherto kept under the lid of violence and oppression.

There is no tradeoff between stability and democratic freedoms. On the contrary, they reinforce each other. No nation can go it alone. Such challenges must be met on the basis of international legitimacy. The governance of a complex and interconnected world can and should be developed in various ways, through new or reformed bodies, in order to achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency.

Still, the political and legal basis lies with the United Nations. I am aware of the on-going debate on the need for greater cooperation between the United Nations and the new forms of international governance that this General Assembly has initiated in such a constructive spirit. In this regard, I wish to pay tribute to President Deiss for his determination in promoting this dialogue.

The issue of global governance goes to the heart of the United Nations. It also requires the United Nations to cope with significant change and diversification. New global actors have emerged on the international scene; others will follow in their footsteps. The legitimacy of the Organization is embedded in the universal principle of equality among its Members, of which this Assembly is the greatest expression.

The Charter is the result of a spirit of give and take, of tolerance and of openness and respect for the views and interests of others in the spirit of dialogue, compromise and search for consensus best expressed by Mahatma Gandhi, who said: "But all my life through, the very insistence on truth has taught me to appreciate the beauty of compromise".

In order to strengthen the maintenance of international peace and security, any reform of the Security Council should enable the Council to be more representative, efficient and accountable to the Member States. We need consensus on that issue, more than on any other provision of the Charter. We all share the goal of international governance, peace and

security. The entire membership must be able to claim ownership of Security Council reform.

Europe is in the front line of today's challenges. Last week, the European Union Heads of Government took significant steps towards streamlining and strengthening fiscal and monetary discipline in the Eurozone. They reaffirmed their commitment to building a partnership of security and development in the Mediterranean.

Since the beginning of the integration process, Europe has lived in peace, for more than 60 years, for the first time in history. It has expanded from the original six to 27 countries. It cooperates with the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. It has a single currency. It has created a common space in which to trade and circulate freely.

Now, we need more Europe. With the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union moved forward on the path of institutional strengthening and parliamentary accountability. Current circumstances dictate more integration, including the further pooling of sovereignty, especially in the fiscal and monetary domain. For us Europeans, this is a must; there can be no turning back from the common currency that 17 member States freely choose to share.

The good health of the euro is vital to the world economy. As stated recently by the European Council, we are ready and willing to take all the necessary measures to that effect. The strengthening of the single currency requires more integration; in turn, it will be the driving force for further progress towards a single European voice in world affairs, including in foreign and security policy.

Europe's choices were rooted in history, triggered by tragic mistakes, and backed by the steady support of the United States of America and by the security provided by the Atlantic Alliance. In the universality of the United Nations, the European pattern does not claim to be a one-size-fits-all model. Yet, by succeeding beyond any realistic expectation, the European Union epitomizes the benefits and added value of multilateralism and international cooperation. Let me take pride in our journey from ashes and rubble to a healthy union of peoples and Governments. What we have achieved in Europe in peace, stability, prosperity and justice is what the Charter of United Nations stands for throughout the world.

Italy has been unstinting in its support for the United Nations, which is the most legitimate forum for promoting the fundamental values of humankind. A robust and credible United Nations serves the best interests of the international community. The sixth-largest contributor to the regular budget and to peacekeeping operations, Italy also contributes more Blue Helmets than any other European country. Not only do we financially support the United Nations missions, but we also provide human resources, equipment and the know-how to effectively implement the Security Council's mandates.

In a post-conflict environment, nations, peoples, women and children identify their hopes for a better future in the flag of the United Nations. Their expectations must be met. Eight thousand Italian women and men in uniform at the service of United Nations or United Nations-authorized peace operations; the Brindisi Logistics Base; the recent cooperation agreements between the Carabinieri Corps and the Organization for the training of Blue Helmets — these are Italy's contribution to allowing the United Nations to fulfil its mission. Our long, distinguished and challenging history of participation in United Nations missions includes the highest sacrifice bravely paid by Italians in blue helmets.

Let me now touch on issues that are especially dear to our heart. First, our opposition to the death penalty arises from our long-established conviction in the right to life. In the 1700s, the Italian philosopher Cesare Beccaria asked a simple question: "Did anyone ever give to others the right to take his life?" The historic 2007 General Assembly resolution 62/149 on a moratorium on executions was given a boost by increased voting majorities in 2008 and 2009. Italy is confident in the momentum created by civil society and in the growing support of the membership for abolishing capital punishment.

Secondly, we want to bring to the attention of the world community the dramatic plight of children in armed conflict. We support a training project for Blue Helmets who are going to face this plight on the ground.

Thirdly, we are committed to the elimination of all forms of violence against women, and in particular the practice of female genital mutilation.

In the wake of President Truman's words in San Francisco — "All progress begins with differences

of opinion and moves onward as the differences are adjusted through reason and mutual understanding" — Italy will continue ask the United Nations to be in the forefront in the prevention of genocide, the fight against all forms of discrimination, the protection of minorities and the elimination of religious intolerance.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Italy for the important statement he has just made.

Mr. Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.